# Controversy brews over proposed £600 million theme park in Bucknell



Plans for a £600 million theme park inspired by the Puy du Fou attraction in France have drawn significant controversy in the small Oxfordshire village of Bucknell, situated near junction 10 of the M40 motorway. The proposed site, spanning over 500 acres of farmland north of Bicester, aims to replicate the historical re-enactments that have made the original Puy du Fou one of France's most popular theme parks. The French site received 2.8 million visitors last year and is known for its immersive storytelling rather than traditional amusement park rides.

Derek Hall, an 80-year-old pig farmer, is at the centre of this local discord, as he and his wife, Kate, are in the process of selling their land to Puy du Fou. The couple has faced backlash from some residents who view the project as a potential "nightmare." Derek noted, “Some people will look the other way,” referring to the cold response he has received from locals since the announcement. He explained the pressures of pig farming were a significant factor in the decision to sell, citing losses of £10,000 per week during a challenging year for the industry in 2022.

Local worries are anchored in concerns about increased traffic and noise pollution. Sarah Evans-Roberts, a 64-year-old local council officer, expressed her apprehensions about logistics, noting that existing roads are inadequate and that there are better-suited locations for such a development. She stated, “I am not against the fact that we're getting an attraction, but I think there's plenty of brownfield sites that would be more suitable.” Other residents have echoed similar sentiments, including Nick Jones, a 66-year-old technical director, who remarked that he moved to the village for a quieter life and finds the impending growth overwhelming.

Colin Hornby, 45, offered a neutral perspective. He suggested that land would eventually be sold for development, whether for a theme park or housing, stating, “Pick your poison, really.” Some locals accept the concept of the theme park as potentially preferable to a massive housing estate or industrial warehouses. Hornby acknowledged that Puy du Fou's plans included environmentally friendly aspects, with reports of 20,000 trees and wildlife-friendly features being incorporated into the site.

However, residents close to the site remain apprehensive. Concerns regarding the park’s impact on village tranquillity and infrastructure continue to dominate discussions. Steve Alderton, 67, a new resident, described the park's proposal as invasive, while others mentioned the unrealistic claims about public transport access for visitors.

In response to the community's fears, Puy du Fou has aimed to clarify misconceptions and address concerns about its operational practices, including dispelling allegations of far-right political ties and previous associations with Russia. The company announced that it would be organising consultations in the lead-up to the formal planning submission expected in the summer.

On social media, a group supporting the Puy du Fou project has emerged. Adam Goodger, a fan of the original park in France, argued that the concept gets mislabelled as a typical theme park and emphasised its cultural and historical significance. He stated, “Puy du Fou isn't that. It's some incredibly clever and innovative ideas that bring together the history of the country they are in.”

Amidst the mounting tension in Bucknell, with mixed opinions illuminating the community, the future of the proposed development hangs in the balance as plans are scrutinised and debated ahead of potential local consultations and planning applications. The site aims to blend historical experience with natural beauty, leading its advocates and critics alike to ponder what might be at stake for village life in Bucknell should the project proceed.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.banburyguardian.co.uk/arts-and-culture/more-details-released-about-new-puy-du-fou-theme-park-planned-near-banbury-and-bicester-4963871> - This article corroborates details about the proposed Puy du Fou theme park near Banbury and Bicester, including its investment value and the controversy surrounding it.
* <https://banburyfm.com/news/plans-for-history-themed-destination-park-released/> - This source supports the announcement and consultation process for the history-themed park, which is a £600 million project.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source of the article itself, providing insights into local reactions and concerns about the Puy du Fou project.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puy_du_Fou> - This Wikipedia article provides background information on Puy du Fou, its history, and the type of experiences it offers, which supports descriptions of the theme park's immersive storytelling.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c4564zj33zmt/puy-du-fou> - This BBC news topic provides additional coverage of Puy du Fou developments, including controversies and public reactions.
* <https://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/news/23297066.residents-react-new-puy-du-fou-park/> - This article covers local reactions to the proposed park, echoing concerns about traffic, noise, and environmental impact.